

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 12, 2008

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Byrd and Ranking Member Cochran:

Thank you for your efforts to provide increased funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) this year, including in the recently announced chairman's mark for a second stimulus supplemental appropriations bill. We also appreciate the inclusion of \$250 million for the Weatherization Assistance Program in the chairman's mark.

With the explosion in home energy costs, it is critical that every step is taken to provide emergency funding as quickly as possible to help citizens across the nation cope with the summer's sweltering heat and prepare for the cold winter ahead. Therefore, in addition to pursuing funds through the second stimulus supplemental, we urge you to include at least \$2.5 billion for LIHEAP in any Continuing Resolution that may be considered.

The need for additional LIHEAP money is without question. In both warm weather states and cold weather states, extra LIHEAP funding will help avert deadly crises. Record-high temperatures have resulted in several deaths in California, Texas and Oklahoma. In Dallas, temperatures exceeded 100 degrees for nearly two weeks straight.

In cold weather states, energy officials are concerned that high heating prices will create a humanitarian crisis as millions of families go cold because they can't afford to pay their utility bill. With heating oil prices projected to exceed \$4.60 per-gallon, the cost to heat a home could be as much as \$4,000 this winter. To deal with high prices, many families resort to unsafe heating methods, forgo lifesaving prescription medicine, or skip meals.

In both warm weather states and cold weather states, utility shutoffs have increased due to the struggling economy and record-high energy costs. In Arizona, the amount of households behind on their bills is up 36 percent from last year, and the number of disconnections in Phoenix alone has increased by 11,000 families from last year. In Pennsylvania, more than 650,000 households are in arrears, up from less than 500,000 last year. The National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA) estimates that more than 15.6 million households could face utility shutoffs because they can not pay their energy bill.

One answer to this problem is increased funding for LIHEAP. At the current funding level, LIHEAP serves only 15 percent of eligible families. With costs expected to be much higher in the coming year, far fewer families will be served if additional funds are not provided.

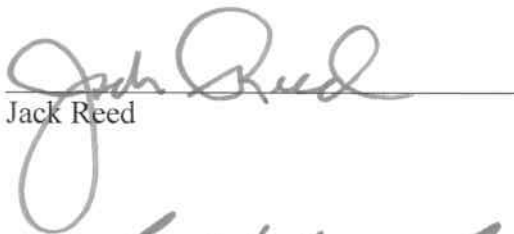
An extra \$2.5 billion will nearly double the Fiscal Year 2008 appropriation for LIHEAP and extend this vital lifeline to more low-income families and seniors.

Another action that Congress should take is increasing funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program. This money can be spent in advance of the coming winter and make energy bills lower not only this year, but for years to come. According to the National Association for State Community Services Programs, first year energy savings for households weatherized in 2008 will be more than \$413. Less burdened by record-high energy bills, these families will have more money to spend on other essentials. Furthermore, the efficiencies produced by weatherizing a home pay for themselves quickly by creating jobs, reducing overall energy consumption, and cutting greenhouse gas emissions. We appreciate the recognition you have shown for these contributions by the addition of emergency funds in the second stimulus supplemental appropriations bill.

Thanks to your leadership, the Senate has shown bipartisan support for LIHEAP and Weatherization, and we thank you both for your commitment to helping low-income families. We urge you to continue to do everything possible to ensure that emergency funds are provided for LIHEAP and Weatherization.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed



Susan M. Collins



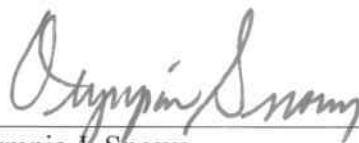
Edward M. Kennedy



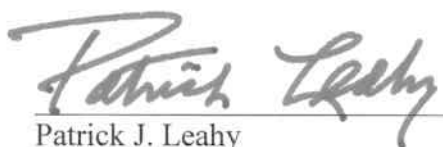
Arlen Specter



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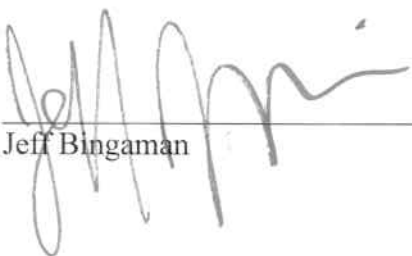
Max Baucus



John D. Rockefeller IV



Ken Salazar



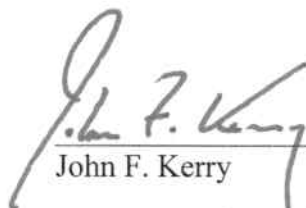
Jeff Bingaman



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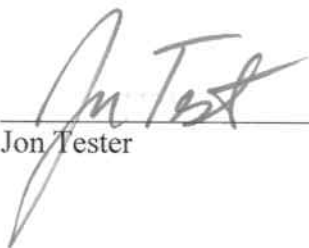
John F. Kerry



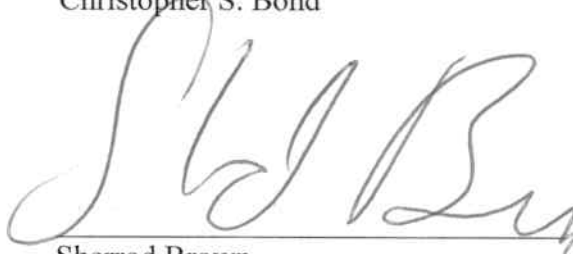
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